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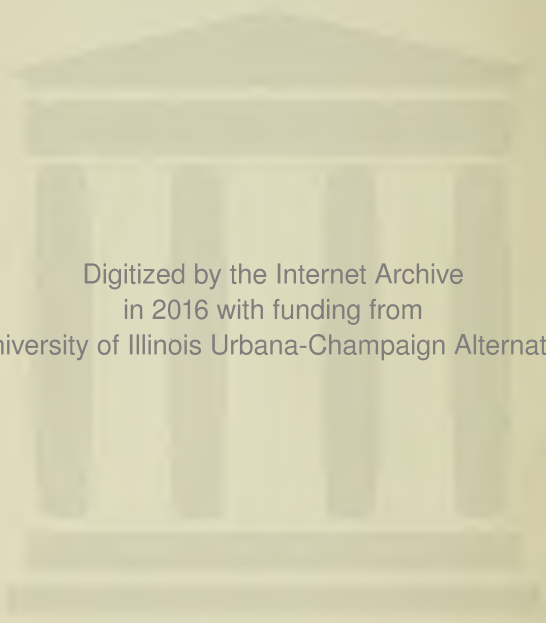
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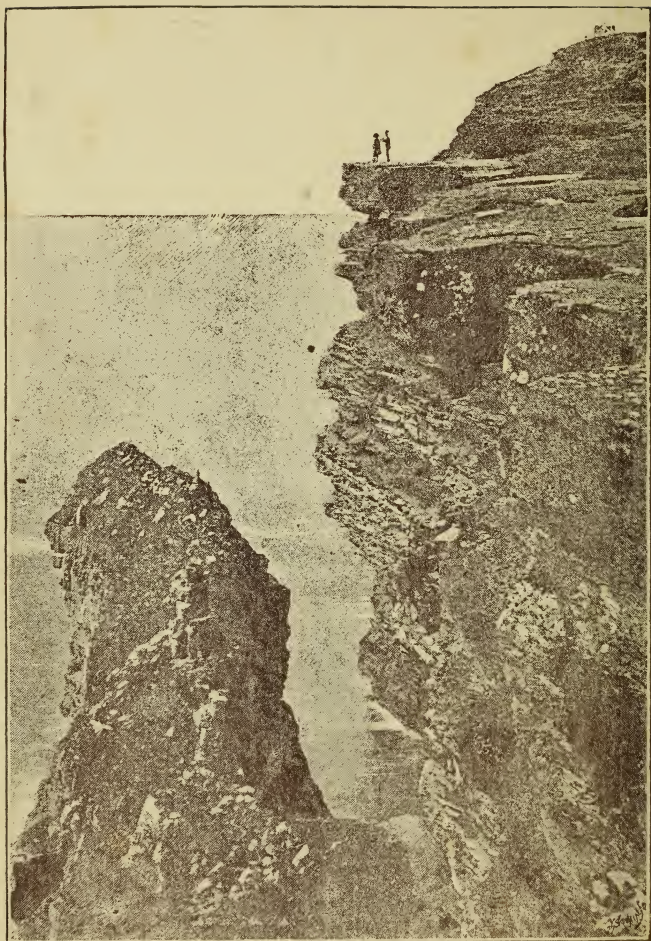


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CLIFFS OF MOHER.
From a Photo by W. Lawrence.

HOLIDAY HAUNTS
ON THE
WEST COAST OF CLARE,
IRELAND.

BY
H. B. H.

LIMERICK :
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1891.

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MAY 13th, 1891,

TO THE MEMORY OF MY BROTHER,

G. A. H.,

THIS VOLUME

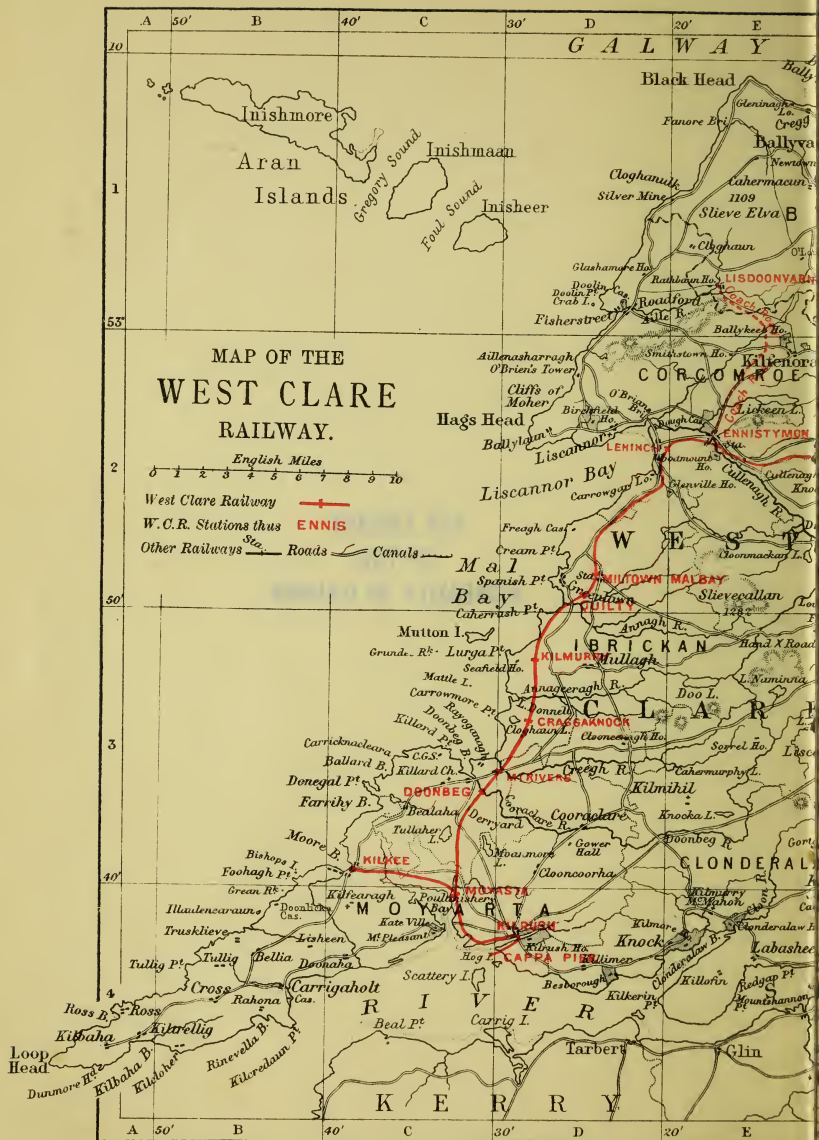
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BY THE AUTHOR.

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HOLIDAY HAUNTS ON THE WEST COAST OF CLARE,

IRELAND.

“ Pleasant sea ;
So boundless or so beautiful as thine,
The eagles’ vision cannot take it in,
The lightning’s wing, too weak to sweep
its space,
Sinks half way o’er it like a wearied bird ;
It is the mirror of the stars, where all
Their hosts within the concave firmament,
Gay marching to the music of the spheres,
Can see themselves at once.”

Campbell.

ANYONE appreciating wild natural scenery as well as having a love for wide expanse of ocean, when viewed from the shore, should visit the west coast of Ireland to enjoy it. We have no doubt there are a large number who admire the sea to look at, and bathe in, but who have a decided objection to trust themselves afloat on its surface for any lengthened period. And no wonder such antipathy

to a "life on the ocean wave" should exist in some minds, when, being "rocked in the cradle of the deep," is, in their experience, unhappiness and discomfort. However, nearly everyone enjoys a visit to the sea-side—indeed there is a yearning, almost in every breast, we think, when the summer sun warms the earth, and when bud has developed into blossom, and our own hearts being tuned in harmony with the "voice of the waves," to seek repose and enjoyment on the sea-shore. And in no other part of the "Green Isle," in our opinion, is there so much of precipitous cliff, bold headland, and expansive sea-view, as may be seen by those who traverse the coast from Loophead to Blackhead in the County Clare. Of course anyone having a fancy for umbrageous foliage, sylvan groves, and lovely parterre, must seek elsewhere for such, because trees and shrubs are rare along this coast, except in sheltered glens, or other suitable situations. Those trees and shrubs which venture to

show their heads above a wall, or other protection, are cut down just as neatly as if a shears were applied to them, and by the force of the prevailing wind, which being westerly, and owing also to the peculiar atmosphere at the sea coast, are bent so much landward, that the superstitious mind is disposed to attribute the deformity to those fairy elves who are said to gambol on shrub and tree at night under "the light of the moon."

We have no doubt whatever that those who live inland, and who could say in the language of the Poet

Instead of shores where ocean beats,
I hear the ebb and flow of streets ;

and who, being satiated with all that is artificial in life, and desiring change of scene, should seek repose from the round of gaiety which is, as a rule, characteristic of Town life, away at the sea-coast. And no tour, in our opinion, is so attractive as that which embraces the western

shores where one is not usually trammelled by those rigid rules of etiquette which influence our movements so much at home. Unfortunately, however, the conventionalities of home life are too often carried with us, to our temporary residence by the sea, which often is the cause of much discomfort, and detracts from one's enjoyments considerably. So, dear reader, just imagine by the action of some kind fairy, that we are entering Kilkee, in the County Clare; what a surprise when this natural picture is presented before us! Here, sheltered in a bay, of horse-shoe shape, on the shores of the Atlantic, a sort of recess in the coast, is nestled this delightful watering place, a maritime Town without the shipping, or the manufacturing enterprises, which are such objectionable features in places where one wishes to be free from worry, excitement, and bustle. Kilkee has its fashionable quarter like other places—its “Esplanade,” and “West End:” and for those who like natural

curiosities, there are the "Puffing Hole," and a curious rock formation, known as the "Amphitheatre." Caves also of great magnitude, extend very far inland under the cliffs, access to which is obtained from the sea, in those canvas-covered boats called canoes, which are the safer craft in which to venture out in this tempestuous coast. There are also the "Arch Cliff," and other natural objects, for any one who enjoys such scenery, to gratify one's taste. However, we do not particularize those as an attraction or as an incentive to anyone to visit Kilkee. We take a higher ground, namely, for the sake of those seeking health and recreation, and therefore present the west coast in "Nature's dress" of wide ocean, bold rock, high cliff, with Nature's green carpet laid down, up to the summit of these big elevations, which give such wild grandeur to the locality. The health-giving breeze wafted to these shores is its best recommendation, it is borne across thousands of miles of ocean purified, and

charged with the saline properties which give it its pungency, and its vitalising power, and which contact with the sea only can impart to it; and having neither land, house, island, swamp, or any impurities, to taint, or intercept its progress, we have air the purest and most invigorating that it is possible to breathe, and which is just as cooling as it is invigorating in the hot days of summer, fanning one's face when reclining, or walking on those grand old cliffs, which are such remarkable features in Kilkee, as well as in other parts of the coast scenery. The sea also comes to this western coast tempered by the gulf stream, making it so pleasant for those "shorn lambs" who bathe in its waters. In Kilkee also are attractions such as we value in home life, namely,—imposing mansions, well-kept, and extensive hotel establishments, lodgings of every description, to suit "all sorts and conditions of men," public baths not surpassed by any other sea-side resort in Ireland, bathing

machines, large and well supplied shops and warehouses, where the best goods are obtainable and, as a result of this co-working of art and nature, we find Peer and Peasant, and, indeed, all classes, from far and near, coming to this pretty sea-side retreat in the season, in their thousands: and when the railway communication is fully developed the influx of the pleasure-seeking population will, no doubt, be considerably increased. The noble sandy beach in Kilkee is a picture to gaze upon with delight, when at ebb tide young and old crowd its smooth strand, to play games, and run races, on foot as well as astride, on those "four"-footed donkeys which are such a feature in holiday life in Kilkee. And when the tide is full in, or flowing, we have on such occasions the sea almost alive with human beings buffeted by the waves, romping and plunging beneath the surface, like so many porpoises. The scene is varied by the cries of alarm from the timid adults, as well as from nervous

children, but the joyous shouts and laughter of others, who seem to take to the water like amphibious animals, drown all other discordant cries. Pedestrians have in the neighbourhood inducements to exercise, with "George's" Head on one hand, and Look-out Hill on the other side of the bay, with other cliffs besides, extending right and left to climb. There is everything connected with the scenery acting as an incentive to live as much as possible in the open air, alternately walking and resting on the grass-covered slopes, or in some shady nook, or deep recess of rock, finding solitude and repose while the life-giving breeze inspires one with animation, paints the pale cheek with the colour of the rose, gives vigour to the weak limb, and energy to the mind, which toil, trouble, and worry have impaired. Numbers who have come to the west coast with "hearts beating funeral marches to the grave," testify that they have returned to their homes after having

had these solemn notes changed into songs of rejoicing for restored health: but to realise all the pleasures, and derive all the benefits one is capable of enjoying from a residence at Kilkee, or elsewhere, we must make the best use of time and opportunity, allowing none of the ordinary troubles of life to reach us, and not permitting anything more serious to disturb "the even tenor of our ways" than the splash of the wave, or the moaning of the wind, or the laughter of children. It is only when we dissociate ourselves from the worrying cares of business and professional duties, that we are ever able to derive any real advantage from our holiday trips, or sea-side residence. If we carry our troubles into hours set apart for recreation, better remain at home altogether, and drop quietly into an "untimely grave." To regain health, and to build up strength of body for future use and action, change of scene is not sufficient—change of habit also is necessary. There must be relaxa-

tion for mind as well as for body: the sun-bath and air-bath are as essential as are the tepid, sponge, or open sea bathing. And giving all due attention to such matters, and associating with suitable companions, who have sympathies in common, and tastes in harmony with one's own—not tastes or habits that are vicious or depraved. We have those natural aids to health, to enjoy which a wise and merciful Providence has provided so lavishly in those health-giving regions.

We are aware that in every gathering at the sea-side there are those who have the “will and the way” to take excursions, and visit distant objects, and places of interest, in a wider area than that which the scenery in the immediate locality affords, and should such follow us on our route along the coast, taking excursions inland occasionally, they shall have, we think, some enjoyable trips to make. We know also that men assemble at the sea-side who have different tastes,

and who delight in the study of Botany, Geology or other kindred pursuits, and for such there is ample scope in our western sea-board. The hills and valleys are the habitat of plants, which are rare in other parts of Ireland, and, indeed, we believe, not to be found at all, except on the slopes of the Alps ; we have rocks and stones representing different periods of the world's formation, and sand, gravel, peat, and clays, also which the Geologist may investigate ; the followers of Izak Walton have in the fresh water lakes and streams an opportunity to "ply the gentle art," and should others desire to entice the larger fish which are so abundant in the deep sea, the local fishermen all along the coast are ever ready to hire their canoes for a few day's fishing in the Atlantic, and to assist one in every way to capture the finny tribe ; or sitting on the rocks, with rod and bait, there is enjoyment for those who admire such pastime. However, when the wind is high and the waves

strong, caution is necessary, as the waves may at any moment become one's winding sheet. In the pursuit of pleasure, as well as in every-day life, there are risks and danger to life and limb, so that prudence should guide our actions at the sea-side as well as everywhere else. And these plants, and flowers of the sea, which are commonly called sea-weed, growing on the rocks, as well as those cast ashore, torn up from the sea-forests, down deep below, which grow so luxuriantly, are interesting studies; and not omitting the "living things" which adhere to the rocks, and are met with, when the tide recedes, in little pools, and tiny lakes on the shore, all of which are curious objects; and much information and a large amount of enjoyment is experienced in watching their movements. The Antiquarian also has in the ancient castles, moats, raths, and mounds, subjects to investigate, and local traditions to enquire into—and, in fact, for everyone, there is something to admire, and be interested in.

An excursion on foot may be made to Dunlicky Castle, on the coast, near Kilkee, and northward to Baltard Castle, and Doonbeg Strand and Castle—all interesting old ruins, each of course with a history and traditions of its own.

Carrigaholt Castle is a much longer distance away, and would be too long a walk for anyone except an athlete. Carrigaholt, or Carrigaholty, means the “Town of the rock of the fleet,” and its origin is traceable to the anchorage for vessels, under a rock, on the shore. This old Castle is another of those structures which are so numerous in the County Clare, and which, like all other ancient buildings of the same type and character, has a history which would fill a bulky volume to narrate. A mansion, quite close to it, is inhabited by one of the local gentry, and a dismantled battery not far away. A “Patron’s” or Saint’s well is also near on the shore, and as the fishermen passed in their canoes with nets piled up, rowing

to their fishing grounds, each might be observed taking off his hat, with all due reverence, as if engaged in prayer, no doubt seeking protection from the angry waves, as well as asking for success in their fishing operations. To us it is a source of deep regret that all old ruins like Carrigaholt Castle, in fact no matter of what class or style, are not taken charge of by the Government, and preserved for posterity as "National Monuments." Lapse of years and the influence of wind and weather are making sad havoc of many of them. As time rolls, all these old ruins, moats, stone circles, ancient places of sepulture, and other historical sites, will be thought more of than we, of the present day, think of them, and therefore these ancient records of the work of the past ages should be restored, and maintained, if for no other object than to illustrate the architecture of remote ages, for the benefit of future generations. It is not at all improbable that owing to the

apathy of the men of the present era that our successors will censure us just as much as we condemn those who in preceeding ages disfigured and destroyed so many of those abbeys and castles which even in their ruinous state are beautiful. The formation of antiquarian associations in modern days is evidence that we are now endeavouring, in some measure, to atone for past neglect, in arresting the progress of decay of a few of the most interesting of the number remaining. All interested in antiquarian research, we trust, will not rest satisfied until the study of antiquarian subjects is enforced in our National Schools and Colleges, and that honours, rewards, and prizes be given as an incentive to teacher and pupil alike, with a view to preserve all ancient structures and places of interest, and by such means prevent acts of vandalism which are so common among the thoughtless, and which are not consistent with modern ideas of civilization. Here and there, as we proceed along the

coast from Kilkee to Loophead, are so many objects worth noting that one should not be in a hurry; it is essential, in order to realize the beauty of the surrounding objects, to pause often and survey sea, sky and land, and with every inspiration, as it were, fill one's mind with something to carry away to dwell upon, and think of, and talk of at our own fireside, and among one's friends and acquaintances, in places remote, perhaps from these scenes of holiday life. There are many curious twistings and turnings of the coast to be observed as one drives along, but of all the remarkable features of coast-line there is nothing to surpass the interesting sight at the "Bridges of Ross." Here, with the sea rushing beneath, we stand upon arches which the mind of man never designed, and which the hand of man never formed; beholding such natural, and yet art-like, formation, one is lost in amazement.

Continuing our journey we reach Loophead, where we find ourselves in the midst of such a wide expanse of sea, and

vast extent of coast line, that our feelings are excited to the highest pitch of admiration; on the one hand the estuary of the Shannon is in view for miles inland—a river, no doubt, it is called, but in our opinion, owing to its great depth, and its vastness in every way to Foynes Island, it would be more fitly described by calling it an arm of the sea—and stretching far away is the “broad Atlantic”—

“Thou huge heaving sea,
Thou art speaking to me;
Ever strong, ever free,
Is the voice of the sea:
Ever rising with power,
To the call of the hour,
Is the swell of thy tides as they flow.”

And across the mouth of the Shannon the coast of the kingdom of Kerry is visible, with its headlands, capes, and bays, and standing above all, on the coast line, are the Brandon Mountains, near which lived the saint who gave them his name, and to whom tradition assigns the honour of being the first navigator, from the old world,

who touched the shores of the new: and more inland still, the “Reeks,” rising from near Killarney, lift their heads above the neighbouring hills—each and all a picture to admire, and a prospect to enjoy, to which “distance lends enchantment to the view.” At one’s ^{rate} feet are rugged rocks, and deep indentions of coast, with the sea seething beneath, through a chasm which separates the mainland from a small island opposite, which either the action of the mighty Atlantic wave, or some upheaval of nature, cast adrift in ages past. This wide gulf, a local gentleman attempted to span with a bridge, in order to obtain access to the island, but owing to the impracticability of obtaining a landing on the opposite shore of the island in order to work from both sides, he was obliged to conduct his operations from the mainland only, which increased his difficulties to such an extent that the work was abandoned when the bridge had been built about half way across and there it is,

jutting out, as it were, in mid air, crumbling fast to decay, and the little island remains, as we believe as it always was, inaccessible to man or beast. Standing beside this fragment of man's ingenuity, and looking across at the almost perpendicular sides of this derelict island rock opposite, and bending over to catch a view of the rushing waters down deep below, as it beats against the cliff, and taking in at a glance the great height of those cliffs at both sides, and the loneliness of the situation, one shudders at the sight. The same ingenious gentleman utilised a natural gallery, under an overhanging cliff to obtain access to a shelving rock to which he had earth conveyed, and converted this dreary spot into a miniature pleasure ground, for his amusement, descent to which he contrived by placing a step-ladder down a steep cavity in the earth, from which this natural gallery branches off towards the shelving rock; but like everything else that man contrives

and constructs, time obliterates it sooner or later, if allowed to remain uncared for, and so it is in this particular place the hand of time has left little or no trace of the garden, and alas! he who planted and tended it is not now alive to restore it to the state it was formerly in. However, a descent into the cavity, and a visit to this unique attempt at gardening "under difficulties," will amply repay one for the trouble and time expended. The light-house at Loophead is a remarkable object, standing high amid such solitude; owing to the courtesy of the keeper we were permitted to view the interior which afforded us much pleasure. Anyone who visits Loophead should inspect the mechanism which flashes the light across the waters, from the lantern above, proving a useful guide to those mariners who frequent this exposed coast. Loophead light-house is a picture of neatness and good order, but the isolated position of those who tend and care it, and the dull monotonous lives they

lead, claim our sympathy. The Government, or some department of the State, or benevolent person, or institution, should provide books or literature for the keeper and his assistants to relieve the dreary hours in the long days of winter and early spring-time.

Loophead, like all other parts of Ireland, is associated with legends and stories, which amuse if they do not instruct : And after all is not this legendary lore a harmless thing—no doubt it is not what the practical mind would like to dwell upon, and some may scoff at it; but even in this age we are not without a taste for the sentimental as well as the practical, however there are minds that will not see good in anything except it is viewed from “the matter of fact” side. Everything to them has to be proved like a problem in Euclid ; all those objectors forget that the legends

and stories which used to delight and
enthrall our youthful imagination,

When o'er all there hung the shadow of a fear,
A sense of mystery the spirit daunted,
And said, as plain as whisper in the ear,
The place is haunted,

have come down to us from a time when,
although it could be said of the "dark
age" just as well as when the poet penned
the lines—

We find
Books in the running brooks, Sermons
In stones, and good in everything.

they had not among them men capable of finding any lesson, such as we discover now, in the rivers and brooks, meandering through valley and plain; and although having stones and rocks in abundance, such as we have, they had not, as in our generation, a Hugh Miller to read the history of creation in the rocks, and make them speak to us as in a volume of the wonderful operations of nature such as he revealed to us in "The Testimony of the Rocks," that work of his intellect which

has become a standard authority for Geologists in the present day ; and still applying the Poet's metaphor, although having good in everything, then, as well as now, the learned or the learning were not forthcoming to discover the good amid the ignorance in which the world was sunk, and which subsequently came to light, and is being developed from time to time since christianity has been exerting its civilizing influence. There were no printed books, because the age of printing was long subsequent to the period referred to, no literature such as we have in our time, and so "gross darkness" prevailed, and it came to pass that the memory became the depository of knowledge, such as it was ; passing events had to be stored up in the mind, and all incidents, social, political, and historical, were treasured in it, and were transmitted from "father to son," so that the mind or memory in those days had to discharge the duty which the discovery of printing has enabled us to

employ books for in modern days. And thus the imagination, ever fertile, magnified local squabbles into great battles, pigmies grew to be giants, rocks and stones, which were removed from one place to another, or set up on end for some purpose or other, by the ordinary means then available, were said to be hurled fabulous distances by the muscular energy of an individual whom they called a "giant." Even now, when we trust to the memory too much, do we not find out how "treacherous" it is, and how liable we are to exaggerate as well as to "economize truth," and thus we can easily understand how, in the "dark ages," fiction and fact were blended, until fact became overlaid with fiction to such a degree that the original story was lost altogether almost, and thus it happened fiction as a rule came to be our inheritance. After all that can be said against these legends there is really some difficulty in ignoring them altogether since our classical literature, to which we are so

much indebted, is full of incidents, and contains the history of heroes and heroines whom we term "mythical," but which are not less extraordinary than those legends with which Loophead and nearly every part of Ireland are identified. Now with respect to Loophead and its legends, it is related that in years gone by, so remote that the "oldest inhabitant" knows nothing of the time or the date, some great Northern King or Prince, who was persecuted by a woman, swift of limb and stout of heart, sought flight from her southward, and he thought in coming to the County Clare, a place so remote in those days, he would be safe from his persecutor; but not so, she found him out, and in desperation this King or Prince, hearing of her close proximity, fled towards the Promontory, now known as Loophead, never thinking that the sea hemmed him in at both sides so closely as it did; and coming to the extreme point of the mainland he saw this dreadful woman close behind

him, and before him a high rock, which was separated from the mainland by a wide chasm, jumped across and safely landed ; but his persecutor was not to be outdone, so she, landing at his side almost at the same moment, stimulated him to retrace his steps, in order to baffle her, and with one great leap, he got back again to the mainland, but the woman, following his example was precipitated into the sea beneath, and thus escaped this great man from the clutches of his tormentor ! From this incident it is said Loop (corrupted from Leap) Head derived its name, and probably like all other legends, there is a mixture of fact and fiction. It is not at all improbable that in those days of “wild revenge” some one had been driven to such an extremity by his foe, that he had had no alternative but either to choose between the sword, or taking his chance of life by jumping across this chasm, which separates the island from the mainland, and adopted the latter alternative.

Having devoted as much time and space as suited our purpose in exploring the coast, we now seek for more variety inland, and owing to its picturesqueness select the neighbourhood of Kilrush. The run by road or rail presents nothing unusual till approaching the town. Scattery Island is observed about midway in the Shannon, opposite Kilrush, in which island are objects of great historical, as well as local interest, such as one of the round towers that have puzzled the wise in such matters for ages, and still the question is not yet solved, namely, whether of Christian or Pagan origin. There are also on the island extensive and interesting ecclesiastical ruins, in which, in remote ages St. Sennan officiated, and whose memory is still revered in having so many of the people bearing the christian name of "Sinon," living in the neighbourhood. In Kilrush, and for miles inland, is the Vandeleur property, which, no doubt, will occupy a foremost place when the Land

League operations have to be recorded in history, it being the scene of one of the greatest efforts made by the government with a view to sustain the rights of the owner of the soil. However, after evicting a certain number of tenants, and demolishing their homesteads, arbitration was proposed by men of influence unconnected, we believe, with the Land League, and was accepted by the landlord, and now peace reigns where the most intense excitement and agitation at one time prevailed. The mansion and demesne of the Vandeleurs are adjoining the town of Kilrush, and were always occupied by former owners 'til the present member of the family succeeded his father, and now the house is not inhabited by him, or any member of the family. The town of Kilrush is not so prosperous as it should be judging from its position in occupying the best site in the river Shannon for commercial purposes. At Cappa is a substantial pier where steamers trading with Limerick

load and discharge, and at present is the principal place for visitors to Kilkee to land and embark. A steamer plys between Limerick and Kilrush all the year round, taking goods and passengers, and in the summer season a passenger boat runs in connection with the railway to and from Foynes harbour, and the West Clare Railway extension is opening up the coast line from Miltown Malbay to Kilkee and Kilrush. On the shore, nearly opposite Kilrush, in County Kerry, is Tarbert, with lighthouse, and a few miles higher up the river, on the same side, but in County Limerick, Glin Castle, the residence of the Knight of Glin, a descendant of the Geraldines of old, are picturesque places and worth visiting, particularly as one is brought into a region which fiction and fact have made interesting all the world over, owing to its being the scene of that tragedy which gave Gerald Griffin such an incentive to employ his great genius in delineating a heroine like "Eily O'Connor,"

and creating such characters as “Hardress Cregan” and “Danny Man.” In the Clare side of the river, a few miles east of Kilrush, is Knock, at both sides of which are the seats of a number of the county families, whose demesnes are planted, almost to the water’s edge, making the landscape look beautiful as seen from the river when passing in boat or steamer. And in a graveyard near this interesting hamlet rest the remains of Ellen Hanley, the “Eily O’Connor” of Gerald Griffin’s “Collegians,” already referred to, whose body was washed ashore in the neighbourhood, and over whose remains a local gentleman had a headstone erected some years ago, which has been disfigured by relic-hunters taking away portions of it. We should like to see another effort made to erect a more substantial monument over the “Eily O’Connor” whom our distinguished countryman has immortalised and was himself born not many miles distant from the scene of the tragedy; we think

also some memorial of Gerald Griffin should be erected in the City of Limerick, or on the shore near Foynes harbour. And notwithstanding that his name will live in "song and story" the public should mark their appreciation of his genius by erecting something in public on which to engrave his name, as a further means of keeping "his memory green" in the hearts of the people. Charles Lever, one of our great novel-writers, spent some years of his life in Kiltrush, and enjoyed among others the friendship of a well-known County Clare gentleman, who was himself an inimitable story-teller, and it is said many of the humourous scenes in Lever's works were inspired by that gentleman, as well as by a Catholic clergyman who lived in the neighbourhood, and now both lay and cleric, including the distinguished author himself, have "gone hence to be no more seen, for ever." It is not pleasant to have to record the fact that, like Gerald Griffin, Lever has no public monument in his

native land erected to his memory ; and what is still more, his ashes mingle with that of strangers in a foreign country.

There also lived at Kilrush, a Mr. Jackson, who as "Terry O'Driscoll," in his humorous sketches from week to week, in some of the Dublin newspapers, delighted the public of the past generation, and, no doubt many, like ourselves, remember them also.

Limerick, which is 60 miles from Loophead, is a port of some importance, where the water rises at spring tides 23 feet, is a fine old historical city, and having burst the bonds in which the old fortified walls held it for centuries, its enterprising citizens carved out a new city, and now the modern portion is far more extensive than the old, and excels it in beauty ; it is well built, and contains warehouses not surpassed by any other town of its population in the kingdom, and its fine range of streets excite admiration. A visit to Lime-

rick, by river, would not be the least interesting of the many excursions one may take during one's holiday-life in Kilkee, and at the same time enjoy the beautiful scenery on the banks of the Shannon. Indeed it is unaccountable to us that no special service of excursion steamers has ever been established on the Shannon, like that between Queenstown and Cross Haven and also Galway Bay. Sheltered as Carrigaholt is, and so near Kilkee, we do not see why a service of cars should not be established between Kilkee and Carrigaholt, and a steamer run from thence, calling at Kilrush, Scattery Island, Ballylongford, Tarbert and Glin, going and returning,—with trips to Tralee, the Islands of Arran, and along the coast to Galway, calling at Liscannor, for the cliffs of Moher. A river with such an expanse of water extending so far inland as does the Shannon, having a landscape so charming on both sides, with the tidal portion of it washing the shores of three counties in its progress to

the sea, should have a boat specially employed for pleasure in connection with Kilkee; or with the Railway open to Kilkee, instead of Carrigaholt, make Cappa the starting point. We see nothing to prevent it except want of energy, or the absence of enterprise. No doubt it might be said, a boat already is plying between Kilrush and Limerick, and another to Foynes in the season; but this is not sufficient for those who come to Kilkee, nor for the tourists. The fact is, the estuary of the Shannon, including Scattery Island, Tralee Bay, and the several interesting places along its shores, are unknown parts to the great majority of those who stay at the coast, and as there is no safe anchorage in Kilkee Bay for vessels to lie in, or other suitable accommodation to land or embark, why should not the next best thing be done, namely, employ a steamer on the Shannon exclusively for excursions, using one of the several harbours on its shores for her despatch and arrival. It is all very well to

have caves to visit and rocks to lounge on, but it was never intended that pleasure-seekers who can afford to pay for enjoyment should be for ever burrowing in caves, or like barnacles, stuck to the rocks, when they come to Kilkee for a holiday. Nature has done everything for Kilkee, and art, too, has contributed much towards making it the Queen of watering places in Ireland; all now wanted is to make a better use of the sea, and the river Shannon, which is so conveniently situated for pleasure in connection with the other sea-side attractions. A great deal of the success of those first-class watering places and health resorts in England is due to the facilities afforded for amusement and recreation of every kind. We have also wondered why it is that none of our steamship owners will not do for Ireland, and the British public generally, what is being accomplished for Norway and other foreign places, namely, to employ one or more steamers to take passengers to see the bold

headlands, steep cliffs, and the groups of islands all around the Irish coast, with the beautiful bays and harbours, which, we think, are not surpassed in any other part of the world, and with a landscape also the most attractive that one could desire to see ; and select, say the Shannon, Galway Bay, Waterford, Queenstown, Belfast and Dublin, as centres for such vessels to anchor in, while the passengers are enjoying a few days at the several health-resorts, or travelling more inland to see objects and places of interest which everywhere abound. We venture to assert that thousands seek in foreign countries, enjoyment, which could be obtained nearer home, at far less cost, who have never been in Ireland ; and all this want of knowledge of home life and scenery, is chiefly due to the steam-ship owners, who entice the people away to foreign coasts, by offering trips at very reduced rates to the public. One thing is certain, the brigand is unknown in Ireland, so far as an attack on

tourist or excursionist is concerned, and if there is any sort of violence, bordering on disorder, it does not affect the pleasure-seeker, but is confined to a sort of "land brigandage," which, however unfortunate for those directly interested, is in no sense an obstacle to the free movements of tourists and others, who need never be afraid of having to pay a ransom while travelling in Ireland, like many who are obliged to submit to such an exaction when on the continent, where they are often seized and carried away captives; yet after all this the infatuation for foreign novelties is so great that people venture among a lawless race in the pursuit of pleasure, instead of coming to Ireland of which it might be said now as of old,

"Blessed for ever is she who relied
On Erin's honour and Erin's pride."

To all we have written much more might be added relating to Kilkee and its beautiful region; we have touched the outlines

only, and it is for those who have leisure and greater ability, to fill up the details. And now leaving Kilkee, with feelings of regret, behind, to employ a nautical term, steer northward, wending our way along the coast, still keeping the wide ocean, with old castles, and high cliffs, in view, arriving after a pleasant time spent on the journey, at another sea-side resort known as

SPANISH POINT,

on the Malbay coast. Here also is an extensive strand, with immense sand-hills in the background, in the midst of which are nestled handsome marine residences, and in the neighbourhood are also the seats of the local gentry as well as other sea-side lodges, nearly all of which are detached buildings, and being scattered over a wide area add much to the beauty of the landscape; elsewhere, as in Kilkee, for example, these sea-side houses are, as a rule, built in Town fashion, at Spanish Point it is different, so that anyone wish-

ing to live a secluded life may occupy a house standing on its own grounds, without being brought into close proximity with one's neighbour. At Spanish Point is a hotel of remarkably large dimensions for a rural place, but evidently the beauty of its situation attracts many, or such ample accommodation as this hotel affords, need not have been provided.

Spanish Point, in Summer or Winter, is certainly a charming place to reside in, and having seen it under both aspects we speak from experience: Mutton Island, near the shore, adds to the interest of its position; to it pic-nic parties often resort in canoes or other suitable boats supplied by the ~~San~~ Sandfield fishermen. In Tromora, opposite Mutton Island, once resided a branch of the great Clan O'Brien. Here, in 1276, Donald, the son of Teige-a-luinn O'Brien, lived, when Torlough fled to him, from his uncle, King Brian and his allies, who attacked the Palace of Torlough, at Clonroad, near Ennis. Torlough, it ap-

pears from the interesting paper in the *Antiquarian Journal*, by T. Johnson Westropp, M.A., "having won over and formed an alliance with the sons of O'Brien, of Tromora, the De Burghoes, the O'Madigan's, the O'Kelly's, of Hy-Many, and others marched with his force to attack King Brian, and his allied army, and having met in battle array, at Moy Gressin in Upper Bunratty, Brian was defeated: numbers fell on both sides: among them was De Clare's brother-in-law, Patrick FitzMaurice. Bunratty Castle was filled with lamentations, and each felt his loss as if he had been their relative. King Brian also had fled thither, and was at dinner with De Clare in Bunratty Castle, when the latter's wife denounced the unfortunate King as the sole cause of her brother's death, and got leave to hang the King, who was seized at table, brought out of the Castle, and dragged to death between horses; his head was cut off, and the mangled body suspended by its feet

from a gallows." Happily we live in better times, when equality before the law is the rule; life and limb are respected, and when, if the rights of property have to be dealt with, the "voice" and the "pen," which are now "mightier than the sword" being the only weapons employed to effect changes, which to accomplish in former days, physical force would have been resorted to. It is wonderful, judging from all we read of olden times, what little regard there used to be for human life. In those days it would appear as if men's heads were disposed of with just as much indifference as when we go through our fields now, and with sickle in hand lop the heads off those weeds which are so objectionable to the agriculturist. Evidently, in the "good old times," heads counted to represent so many men, who were moved about just like chessplayers move their men in a game of chess.

The coast at Spanish Point is not so elevated as that at Kilkee, but the sea

beating on the shore is felt to be fiercer, and the waves higher, because, probably, being seen to greater advantage. Sitting on a high elevation, and only able to observe the action of the waves down far below, one is obliged to give greater scope to the imagination, in measuring their size, and estimating their force, but here at Spanish Point, one standing on a lower elevation, is able to observe the waves striking on the rocks, and mounting upwards, in some instances high above the position one occupies. It was to us a most enjoyable occupation, when reclining on the green turf on shore, in the company of those near and dear to us, to watch the sea tossing and foaming on the rocks extending a long distance seaward—just as if in anger, at not being permitted to reach, and submerge us in its vastness. Here, on the shore, in a green field, are a number of grass-covered mounds in a cluster, which tradition assigns to be the graves of the soldiers and sailors who were cast

ashore, when some vessels of the Spanish Armada were wrecked in the neighbourhood, and from which event the place derives its name.

At Freagh, a short distance from Spanish Point, northwards, is another "puffing hole" of large extent, which, if in operation when the sun is shining, produces beautiful rainbow tints, and at each "puff" making a noise resembling that of a distant cannonade. This "puffing" comes from a cavern under the cliff, and is caused, no doubt, by the pressure of the inflowing wave on the air within which rushing out to escape produces the effect described, at the same time carrying a quantity of water in its progress, which, being converted into spray, dashes all round, as well as high up in the air, producing the same effect that rain does, so that a near approach will often cause inconvenience. At about half-tide, and when the waves are strong, this "puffing" is at its best. The collecting and

burning of sea-weed along the coast, and converting it into kelp, which is shipped from Sandfield to England, appears to be a general practice and a profitable industry. Spanish Point is in no sense a Town like Kilkee. Miltown, a mile or so inland, is the town proper, which is of considerable size and importance, with its system of water supply for domestic purposes, and from which town all the supplies come from baker, butcher, grocer, and other warehouses, which contribute to the feeding and clothing of the multitude, and from which the people of Spanish Point obtain their supplies. In Miltown there are two hotels, affording comfortable accommodation, and quite convenient enough to the coast for tourists and others, it has its Bank also for the transaction of monetary affairs. Farther inland Mount Callan soars aloft, and from its summit a wide extent of sea and land may be seen. At Mount Callan are glens and ravines well worth exploring, and in one of which is the residence of a

gallant gentleman who owns the country for a considerable distance on all sides ; it is beautifully situated at the base of the mountain, and so closely surrounded by hills, north, west and east,—that on approaching from the north, after leaving the highway, over the principal carriage drive, across a heath-covered valley of great extent, and by a purling stream, with rare trees and shrubs planted along the avenue here and there, one arrives within a few hundred yards of the mansion before it is seen, and then we have before us wood, mountain, and valley, beautifully planted and artistically laid out, with walks excavated along the sides of a deep glen, the stream rushing below, across which rustic bridges are thrown at certain vantage points, and in sheltered situation are beds of choice plants and flowers, with the royal fern growing luxuriantly everywhere in its habitat, and all this in the midst of district as barren and as isolated as if one lived in the wildest part

of the world, with this difference, of course, that within a few hours drive of Mount Callan, association with civilized life, is possible, and other advantages may be enjoyed, not to be met with in less favoured situations. An ascent to the top of Mount Callan reveals an ancient monument, whose history is lost in obscurity, or like almost all other ancient monuments is mixed up with fact and fable. Not far from the coast are Doulough and Coor lakes, and several rivers also, which, like the lakes, are well stocked with fish, to which many who delight in fishing as a pastime are attracted. The drives, both south and east, through mountain, valley, and plain, are most interesting, so that he who cannot enjoy a month or two at Spanish Point must be hard to please indeed.

Proceeding still northward, by road or rail, the sea is never lost sight of, and we soon reach

LAHINCH,

which is one of the oldest established bathing places on the coast. Its strand, for length, width, and evenness of surface, is not to be excelled in Ireland. The accommodation is excellent, and not only are the lodges in town, but those on the cliffs, and everywhere around, are neat and respectable, and so graduated in size and arrangement, as to admit of being let at prices to suit the position and circumstances of all classes. There are hotels in Lahinch also, all of which are in good, central positions, affording every comfort to those who patronize them. As a centre from which excursions may be made, to objects and places of interest in the locality, there is no other part of the coast that excels it. The West Clare Railway Company have a station within a few minutes walk of the shore, and its opening has been the means of familiarising the public with the West Coast to an extent that it was not possible

to accomplish before the line was constructed. It is a most interesting sight to watch the tiny engine, and those fancy carriages attached to it, trailing along, like a serpent, on the railway track, which is cut out at the base of a range of hills, running parallel with the sea, for miles, between Lahinch and Miltown; and those who travel by it enjoy a view of sea and coast-line, which, if it were seen on the Continent, would excite the tourist's admiration, and crowds would flock to enjoy the spectacle. Lahinch is well sheltered; at the same time it is an open situation, as one feels when the summer sun shines down upon it, and the health-giving breeze from the sea blows on it; hills rise landward, and southerly is the open sea; on the west, a bold promontory affords shelter from the prevailing wind more or less. At Moy is a well-wooded ravine, just close to Lahinch, protected by the cliffs, from the sea breeze, through which a stream flows and discharges into the sea. Trout

abound in this stream, and a day's fishing, to those who like it, may be enjoyed in its waters. The "puffing hole," at Freagh, already described, is only about one hour's drive from Lahinch.

Ennistymon, in the neighbourhood, which has been rendered famous by Banim, in his book, "The town of the cascades," should be visited, if for no other purpose but to enjoy the prospect from the bridge westward, and then glancing over the parapet, at the river plunging down the rocks beneath; or to take a point of observation lower down the stream, and looking towards the bridge after a fall of rain, or when the water in the river is deep, and rushing in full volume over the ledge of rocks the effect is really thrilling. From the windows of the southern front of the principal hotel a fine view is obtained of river and cascade. In the grounds of the "lord of the soil" is a romantic glen, well worth rambling through. The walks, lawns and gardens are well kept, and the

surrounding scenery with the mansion standing on the summit of a declivity, and cascade and river giving animation to the scene, makes the prospect really picturesque. The town of Ennistymon, with its fine range of shops, large hotel and good broad streets, is evidently inhabited by men of taste, energy and enterprise. A Bank, which indicates prosperity is in the town, and a convent situated on a slope of a hill, is a pleasing object in the landscape. On the opposite side of the town stands a large school, under the management of the Christian Brothers, a community which has taken under its charge the education of the boys, while the Nuns attend to the training of the girls. At Ennistymon also is a station of the West Clare Railway, which at present is the nearest to Lisdoonvarna Spas, about six miles distant. The scenery all round Ennistymon is interesting, being only half an hour's walk from the sea, and with a plentiful supply of good water distributed

over the town by gravitation, and having good drainage, there is everything to make it a healthy place to live in, just as it is a desirable one to make money in, judging from the appearance of prosperity on all sides.

In the distant coast line, the towers on Hag's-head, and the Cliffs of Moher, are visible. Standing on the cliffs at Lahinch, the Panorama, taking it from Hag's-head, and including a long range westward, and northward, with the neat, white cottages of the farmers, and the handsome residences of the gentry, dotting the landscape here and there, is as nice a picture as any one could desire to see. Starting from Lahinch, with a view to making a closer acquaintance with the country westwards, we pass at the north side of the Sandhills, which are of large extent and elevation, and keeping an old Castle on a lonely spot, on a sandy beach, to the right, and crossing over a bridge of no mean proportions, just near it, we soon after arrive in Liscannor,

a fishing station on the bay. Here are an ancient castle, and a Coast-guard Station, of modern build, perched near each other, on a prominent cliff, which can be seen for miles around. Liscannor has its little Harbour, where vessels load and discharge their cargoes; there are extensive flag quarries in the neighbourhood, and the flags are shipped to other parts of Ireland, as well as to England,—which traffic has grown into a large industry of late years; coal is also imported here, and the seaweed, after being burned and converted into “kelp,” in large quantities, is also shipped from Liscannor. A number of men are employed in deep water fishing, but have only those frail canoes to face the dangers of the sea, to follow their perilous occupation, the result being that their earnings are precarious. A local gentleman has been endeavouring to improve their position, but, so far, has not been very successful in his efforts to ameliorate their condition, or to provide larger

boats, to enable them to fish in deeper waters, so as to capture the larger sized fish. In Liscannor and its vicinity are laid many of the scenes and incidents recorded by Trollope, in his work, "An eye for an eye"—who has peopled the surrounding country with lords and ladies, who have had no existence, except what his imagination has created. All the same the story is interesting, and is said to be founded on fact.

After passing Liscannor we turn to the left, a little beyond Seamount, and keeping alongside the sea, at Clohanes, for a short distance, mount the ascent to Hag's Head, on which stands one of the old telegraph towers, built on, or near, the site of "Moher fort," and from this elevation of 407 feet we have a view of Stookeen cliff, 580 feet, Aillenasharragh, 632 feet, and Knockardakin, 668 feet, above sea level, which is the highest of all that range. Here are miles of cliff in this extent of

coast, from Hag's Head to Knockerdacken, without any break or interruption, none of which are less than 400 feet in height, and to realize its grandeur fully, one must come to see it. Pedestrians often, as a choice, walk along these cliffs to the highest point beyond, but those who are not accustomed to such long walks should not attempt it. To the strong and the active it is a delightful exercise, with the invigorating sea air to breathe in; however, for those who cannot scramble over the heather, and rough it, to a certain extent, the easier route is to keep to the road and to one's vehicle, which runs at the back of the cliffs, and soon, emerging on the main road turn to the left, and continuing the journey arrive at the foot of the highest range of coast, where stables and coach houses are available for the use of visitors. Alighting here, we scale the sides of a declivity, and reaching, within some yards of the cliff, one's curiosity is excited on hearing sounds like that of the distant notes of the High-

land bagpipes, which, however, on approaching nearer, we discover to proceed from thousands of sea-birds on the wing, of curious shape and colour, the most interesting of the number being, in our opinion, the "sea-parrot." On the ledges of the cliffs are discerned white objects which are inexplicable to one who is not sharp sighted, but with the aid of a telescope, the mystery is soon solved, in having these objects defined, which we discover to be sea-birds perched there, evidently the younger brood "contemplating the scene." On the platform of this cliff is fixed a remarkably large circular stone table, evidently one of those flags quarried in the vicinity, with stone seats all round, securely fixed on the solid rock. Here one can enjoy luncheon, while the wild birds, from almost innumerable throats, sing the thanksgiving. The view from this "table" rock is certainly enchanting; the face of the coast is seen to Hag's Head; the sides of the cliff at the point on which we stand

almost overhang. It is so perpendicular that to look over it would make many a one dizzy. After resting the while, an ascent is made for "O'Brien's Tower." Stone flags are placed on end all along the face of the cliff, as a protection, and at certain "view points," there are "set-offs," so constructed that one can look down below, over the cliffs, without incurring any risk of falling over, and at abrupt points, nice flagged steps are fixed to make the ascent and descent easier; about half way up to "O'Brien's Tower" a pinnacled rock juts out into the sea from the base of the cliff, which is a remarkable object down below, partly covered with very scant verdure, and accessible only to some daring spirit, who would scale the cliff or let himself down by the aid of a rope fixed to the cliff above. On reaching "O'Brien's Tower" we find it was built for accommodating those who came prepared to dine on the spot; there is a kitchen for cooking purposes, and a spacious room overhead to

which access is gained by steps, and from which one can ascend to the roof outside, to obtain a view. After enjoying the prospect we descend, and our next effort is to scale the side of the highest point of all; having reached the summit we are rewarded with a view of land and sea, island and promontory, which to describe in order to convey to our readers any idea of its grandeur and extent, would be an impossibility; nothing less than actual observation could even faintly picture the scene, and one should be under the influence of the exhilarating effects of the clear pure air of this elevated platform to realize all the beauty and grandeur of the situation. To the South and East the view extends to the counties of Kerry, Limerick, Tipperary, Waterford, and Cork; the Galtee Mountains are distinctly observed—in fact, the landscape is only bounded by the horizon, because there is no other cliff, hill, mountain, or elevation, which intercepts the view, for scores of miles inland. Turning

to the West, the Islands of Arran appear as if at one's feet set like emeralds in the crystal waters of the Atlantic, and with such a wide expanse of sea, one becomes fascinated, and as it were spell-bound. Northward, the prospect is just as pleasing; the County Galway and Blackhead appearing only a few miles distant, and the "Twelve Pins," in the County ~~Mayo~~^{Galway}, just as if in the cloudland, yet distinctly visible to the naked eye. And if we are not "monarchs of all we survey," we certainly survey a prospect which a monarch might feel honoured at being privileged to gaze upon.

And standing here on this "tall cliff," nearly 700 feet above the sea, we should realize the fact that we are occupying a position on the nearest coast-line in Europe to the Western Hemisphere, and just as the electric spark is conveying messages under the sea from a neighbouring county on the same coast to the far west, may we not, in imagination, also speak across the

waves with those who are near and dear to us on those shores beyond, which are washed by the same waves that are dashed against the cliff at our feet beneath.

Retracing our steps we are again traversing the road over which we travelled till we arrive at the turn of the road, and proceeding in a southerly direction, soon reach St. Bridget's Well. From the highway here a really fine view is obtained of Lahinch, Ennistymon, Liscannor, and the opposite shore of the bay. About midway to Liscannor, in the midst of a grove of trees, is the fine old mansion known as Birchfield, the seat of the late Cornelius O'Brien, for many years Member of Parliament for the County of Clare, and to whom the public are indebted for the tower on the summit of the cliffs, which bears his name. It was his money and enterprise which reclaimed the land surrounding the cliffs, and for a long distance inland. To his name, and to those who superintended the works for him, is due

the honour of making the surrounding landscape so beautiful. The stables and coach-houses, built for the accommodation of the public, at the base of the cliffs, landward, if not the work of his own hand, are the work of his brain and his money paid for their erection ; but now, alas, not a single member of his numerous family is alive to inherit the property which cost him so much to improve and beautify, and his late mansion, once so attractive, is fast going to decay. The “blessed well,” which the late Mr. O’Brien did so much to ornament, is an interesting place to visit, because of the veneration in which it is held. St. Bridget is the Patron, and hundreds assemble here from distant parts of Clare and the neighbouring county on “Patron” days and at other times to pay their rounds and perform devotional exercises. Adjoining St. Bridget’s Well, in a neat cemetery, is the family vault of the O’Brien’s of Birchfield, wherein the remains of the former head of that house

reposes, and just across the road is a tall limestone column, surrounded by a nice plantation, with the landward side of the cliffs as a background, erected to his memory by public subscription; but the best testimony to Mr. O'Brien's useful life are the improvements effected on all the country round about these cliffs. After a short pause to scan the prospect, so as to fix the impression on the memory, we take our departure for Lahinch. And now having given an outline of the more interesting features of this coast, which we have often visited and never tired of, we prepare for a journey to Lisdoonvarna Spas, and whether one takes a seat in a railway carriage at Lahinch for Ennistymon, and then hire a car for Lisdoonvarna, or drives direct from Lahinch, is a question that each individual must decide for himself; however, we take a car, and driving over the same highway which we traversed on our westward trip, but turning to the right instead of to the left, after

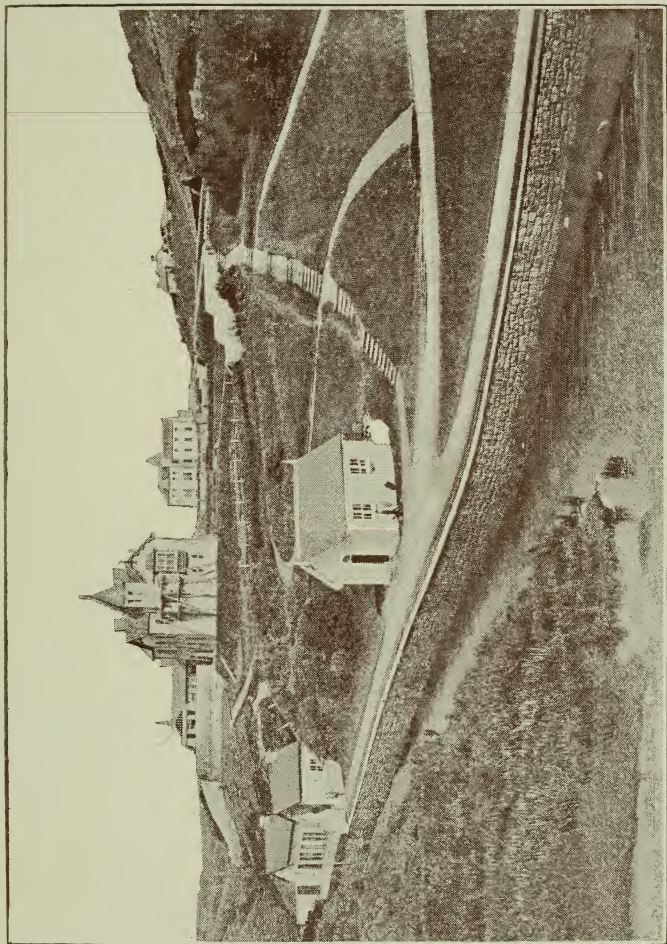
going a short distance beyond the bridge, drive along a valley which is not altogether uninteresting, and on approaching Kilshanny we observe, a short distance from the road, a cairn, or heap of stones, commonly known as “cairn-na-connachta”—or the “cairn of the Connaughtman”—with no ancient building, ruin, or structure of any kind near it, except the ordinary farm-house, not even rocks or other stones in the immediate neighbourhood. This collection is a strange sight, with such surroundings; it appears that tradition assigns to it some history, or story of a battle, or other event, in which an important Connaught personage was slain, over whose grave these stones were piled, having been placed there, from time to time, by passers-by throwing a stone on the spot, which is a custom that used to be practised in Ireland within our own recollection wherever a murder was committed, on, or near the roadside, and probably the custom is observed in other

parts of the country still. Proceeding onward, through an undulating country rather interesting, and coming within a few miles of

LISDOONVARNA

we have a view of the sea again, with more of moorland in the landscape, and soon after are passing over the “spectacle” bridge which crosses a river running through a deep glen on its course to the sea a few miles westward. The peculiarity of this bridge is probably due to the fact that owing to the great depth of the chasm that had to be spanned, the bridge should be built unusually high, in order to bring it on a level with the banks on either side, so as to form a level roadway above; and the architect, perhaps, with a view to make the structure as light and graceful-looking as possible, contrived a circular opening where the dead work should be, and now there are two apertures—one below through which the water flows, and the circular one above,

which is rather a novel feature in bridge-making. After passing over this "spectacle" bridge we turn to the right, and are then brought in line with the ravine which we are after crossing; and near the Episcopal Church, half way down a steep incline, we come to the first of the spas, which are known as the "Twin Wells," namely, sulphur and iron, issuing from the side of a rock, almost side by side, and which both in taste and smell are as distinct as if miles asunder. As we approach the centre of this health-resort, we are impressed with the appearance of large and imposing hotels, and other fine houses, built for the accommodation of those coming to drink its mineral waters; there are large and well-stocked shops on all sides, which are not the least of the many indications of the enterprise of those who built and stocked them; everywhere there are evidences of prosperity, and of the large amount of capital invested, and manifest appearances everywhere of a



LISDOONVARNÄ.—From a Photo by W. Lawrence.

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desire to minister to the comfort of those who come to this interesting region. Good potable water is brought, by gravitation, a considerable distance, and distributed by stand-cocks, and other means; and while the rich and the humbler class meet here, as in the world at large, the wants of all are provided for according to their rank and station, and their ability to pay for extra comforts. Not far from the square, on the road to the sea, to the right, are the iron and the magnesia wells, and down in the valley, on the brink of the ravine already referred to, but on the opposite side altogether, is the great sulphur well, with the baths quite convenient. Here, in a nice "well-house," crowds come regularly to drink the sulphur which appears to be that most generally partaken of, and which is pumped up from the spring beneath; and while some appear to enjoy the draught, others, judged by their grimaces neither like the taste nor smell of it. We could never fancy the sulphurous

odour, which is remarkably strong ; however, like most other draughts for curative purposes, the question of taste and smell must be dismissed from one's thoughts altogether when we partake of such.

On a slight eminence, over the sulphur spa, is the handsomely designed residence of a medical doctor, who evidently enjoys the confidence of the people, judging from the numbers seeking his consulting room. He is owner of the sulphur baths also, and the public have great reason to thank him for this valuable addition to the other health restoring agencies. Farther up the incline is another series of hotels and lodges for visitors. Lisdoonvarna appears to be in two divisions, separated by a deep ravine, with a bridge crossing it near the sulphur well, besides the "spectacle" bridge, lower down the stream. Both sides of the valley are partly built upon, but the business portion is evidently confined to the northern end. As a rule the houses and hotels are detached buildings scattered

over a wide district of country, which present an attractive appearance when seen from a distance, amid such wild scenery, however, good accommodation is provided in apartments adjoining, and over the business concerns, and by most people the houses in the streets are preferred to the outlying ones, for convenience as well as comfort; the hotels are certainly as well managed as any in the kingdom, and admirably fitted and furnished to suit modern tastes and habits. The glens and deep ravines which intersect the country, add much to the beauty of the place. Its close proximity to the sea, which can be seen westward, the mountainous nature of the region, and the peat heath-covered soil, contribute very much to its fame as a health-restoring holiday haunt. And that Lisdoonvarna Spas have effected cures which treatment at home, under medical advice, failed to accomplish, are facts admitted by thousands who have come helpless invalids, and returned to

their homes in the enjoyment of robust health; such evidence is better than all that the faculty could say in recommendation of its springs, and its salubrious air, for the cure of the "ills which flesh is heir to." From Lisdoonvarna excursions are made to the Cliffs of Moher, Lahinch, Spanish Point, and even to Kilkee, already described. The drive from Lisdoonvarna to the Cliffs is a most enjoyable one, along the coast, with the Islands of Arran in view, and the ruins of another old telegraph tower on the landscape, on the coast over Doolin; and here at this extreme west coast, down at the shore at Doolin is some of the best grazing land in the county, which is proverbial for its fattening quality. There is a tradition that an acre of this land fattens a bullock, and if its verdant appearance at all seasons of the year, is any guarantee of richness, the land certainly must be prime. Ballaghane is a fishing station, near Doolin, and being the nearest and most convenient

place for visitors staying at Lisdoonvarna, it is customary to hire a canoe for an excursion to the nearest of the Islands of Arran, which is about an hour's rowing from the mainland, with favourable wind. The Arran people come here with fish to sell, and also to buy goods on the mainland. They bring cattle to neighbouring fairs and markets, and make purchases also, which they take back with them. Horses, cattle, and animals of every description are transported to and from the Island in open boats, and a cruel practice it is, owing to having no place but the beach to land and embark; the want of a harbour or quay of some sort is experienced by the fishermen themselves, who have no place to turn to for shelter when overtaken in a storm, while out at sea fishing. A breakwater connecting the mainland with Crab Island, a few hundred yards opposite the shore, would accomplish all that is necessary, and would be a great boon conferred on the poor men who have nothing to

depend on except the "harvest" which the sea produces for their support. The Government could not better employ the public money than in providing harbour accommodation for the fishermen of the mainland as well as for the Arran people who frequent Ballaghaline.

Driving from Lisdoonvarna to Doolin, subterranean passages may be observed, into which the streams flow, and are carried underground to the sea beyond, and near the coast are openings which indicate where these subterranean chambers exist.

An excursion to Mount Elva, and that long range of hills round about it, from whose summit magnificent views are obtained of sea and landscape, is most enjoyable.

In Kilfenora, a few miles eastward, are ancient churches, a portion of which at present is used for Divine Service, and one of a number of ancient crosses, which

were formerly fixed in several parts of the suburbs of the village, is still to be seen. The road to Kilfenora runs over a rising ground through a wide extent of peat soil on both sides, where turf for the country round is cut and prepared, and which terminates near an abrupt turn of the road, a few miles from Kilfenora, and then clay and lime-stone formation begins ; the descent is a very rapid one into the valley, the view of the extensive tract of land, with Kilfenora down below, an old castle to the left, and its ancient church partly in ruin, the Deanery, close at hand, surrounded by a nice plantation, and the houses of the gentry and farmers, scattered far and wide, and all set in a framework of hills, is indeed a charming picture, and farther inland, at Leimineagh, is an old castle, once the seat of "Mauria Rhue," or "Red Mary," of the clan O'Brien, who it appears ruled the country with a high hand in those days when "might was right." The castle is one of those old

castellated mansions, and it would appear as if built adjoining a more ancient structure of a different type altogether. The difference is easily seen in the slits in the wall to admit light and air, while in the other portion the windows are larger, with stone mullions, and although erected as if to form one edifice, it is evident both are built, from the foundation to the top, separately. The demesne wall of this ancient inheritance of the Dromoland family is in good repair, and can be easily defined, and what was once a carriage drive or entrance to the Castle, has been converted into the public highway for some distance, and the stone pillars of the gateway are preserved along the road in almost the same state they were in when this distinguished lady herself was driven or rode through them.

But the crowning feature of all is the drive to Ballyvaughan round the sea coast by Blackhead. From Lisdoonvarna the route is westward, over a road rising

slightly till one approaches near Ballinalacken, and then the descent is gradual at first, and on a nearer approach to the sea more rapid for several hundred feet, till one reaches the level road running along the coast.

In the valley through which we pass before reaching this point, Ballinalacken old castle is seen on the right, built on the verge of a steep rock, on the brink of a ravine. The mansion of a local landowner whose estate extends "far and near," and who is connected with one high in office under the Crown, is quite close to it, and both the modern, as well as the ancient structure add to the beauty of the situation; the grounds and plantations surrounding this gentleman's residence are well kept and look like an "Oasis" in the desert. Away in this romantic region with magnificent views of sea, rock, and landscape, it is one of these places one would like to live in, to get away from "the busy haunts of men," to enjoy repose and solitude, and

this old castle always so near reminding one of the great difference in manners and habits between the modern landowner and his predecessor, who lived hundreds of years ago; the type of architecture is also so different in the two eras. In the past it seems what we regard as home comforts were utterly disregarded; for example, the admission of light and air through these slits in the wall would not satisfy our modern tastes; they had no need of blinds or window hangings in former days; the moat or trench outside the castle walls must have been their bathing place, with the arch of heaven forming a covering, as we see no provision in this old castle for bath rooms; neither can we observe a trace of a kitchen range or arrangements for sending hot water through the rooms to temper the morning bath for the ladies and gentlemen of the family. We wonder how men of the past could dispense with all the luxuries and contrivances which we, in modern times, consider so necessary for

our comfort and enjoyment. Perhaps, after all, it is as well not to dwell on these matters, or make such comparisons; the changes effected in the manners, habits, and tastes of the people within the last fifty years are nearly as remarkable as those we have been discussing.

And now, after this digression, and a short pause which we consider necessary, to take some mental notes of "passing events," we proceed on our journey to Blackhead. For miles the drive is along the coast, with the sea on one side and a line of limestone hills on the other hand; every few miles we travel reveal new and enchanting scenery, till at length we reach the turn in the road, at the head of Galway Bay, which is the extreme point of land on the coast of North Clare. And here we stand amazed at the expansiveness of the sea view; we have objects before us, seen from the Cliffs of Moher, which appeared a long way off, now as it were spread almost within our reach, the Arran

Islands, as if only a few miles distant, the Galway coast, across the Bay, is so near that we discern small objects. Salthill, a health-resort, and the town of Galway itself are within range of our vision; as to the sea—"the broad Atlantic"—who can adequately describe its vastness and its grandeur. Seen from a high elevation, such as we now occupy, who is competent to pourtray its sublimity; everything appears so calm one imagines it is in repose, but when we see those white specks now and again, which we know are wave-crests, we feel then that its repose is only apparent, and that there is a voice in the wave, but we hear it not; then, just look at those mountain ranges, which were like clouds when viewed from a greater distance, are now more easily discerned, and the whole, including islands, sea, mountains and landscape, focussed into a compass which the eye scans from the spot where we are standing, and such a combination of wild natural scenery, we

venture to assert, cannot be surpassed in any other part of the world.

Behind us is Blackhead, rising hundreds of feet above the roadway where we stand, acting as a fence on one side and for a protection at the other hand, only a dwarf stone wall, and down below the sea dashing in all its fury. An ascent to the summit of Blackhead, which attains an altitude of 647 feet, reveals greater wonder still, the panorama being more extensive on all sides, and to one that loves the sea and its surroundings it is enchanting with

“Echoes and waterfalls and pointed crags

“That into music touch the passing breeze.”

Proceeding for miles alongside this steep cliff and high mountain range, from the side of which the road was excavated, the sea on the other side, we discern objects more clearly across on the opposite shore, according as the bay narrows on approaching its termination, and arriving at Ballyvaughan, with an appetite for

luncheon, soon have the desire gratified. And now, glancing at the scenery of this valley, with Ballyvaughan in the foreground, without doubt it is a most interesting place, and a nice retreat to spend a holiday in. The principal hotel is on the shore, and in our experience it is well conducted, and one can be made comfortable in it, as we ourselves experienced when staying under its roof. A steamer plys between Galway and Ballyvaughan, taking passengers to and from Lisdoonvarna, and excursions are made also to the Arran Islands from it and from Galway. Corcomroe Abbey, founded, it is said by Donald, King of Limerick, in 1194, others say in the year 1200 by his son, Donagh Carbrae, is in the neighbourhood, and here the antiquarian has a rich treat in the study of its sculpture and architecture, and of the events which have given it a foremost place in the Annals of Ireland. In many a hard fought battle in ancient days these plains and hills were reddened with the

blood of the O'Briens and O'Loughlins, and other clansmen of the period. The career of the Princes of Thomond and Lords of Inchiquin are the most remarkable of all the other great Irish families which influenced the destinies of Ireland for a considerable period. Their history might be said to be the History of Ireland at one time. The castles, churches and abbeys, which they built and endowed in Clare, Tipperary and Limerick are evidence of their great wealth, and of the extensive and extended powers which they exercised in former days; and notwithstanding all the turmoil, dissensions, strife and confiscations which history records of the Clan O'Brien, the Marquis of Thomond retained immense possessions till his decease not very many years since, and even the present representative of the family has in Dromoland a home worthy of his high lineage, and enjoys the revenue of a property of vast extent in his native county, and no matter how

one may differ with the religion or the politics of the great house of the O'Brien's, one must take a pride in them on account of the distinguished part they played in the history of Ireland for centuries, although not always admiring the means employed and the plans adopted to conquer their foes or curb the rebellion of their allies and clansmen, as well as their own kinsmen. In this Abbey of Corcomroe, King Conor O'Brien was interred, being slain in a battle not far from its site; again quoting from Mr. Westropp's paper—"and the monks of the abbey buried the King on the north side of the chancel, and put over him his effigy carved in black marble, with his flowing hair and tunic, pointed shoes and a reliquary round his neck, his sceptre and crown adorned with fleur-de-lis." And we who have visited this abbey saw the effigy just as it is described, and in a good state of preservation after a lapse of six centuries, although no effort was ever made to protect it from the ravages of

decay, or the hand of man, until a Government department took charge of the abbey within the past few years, and now abbey and effigy are preserved as one of our national monuments.

A drive to New Quay is also an enjoyable one, and in going and returning there are many objects and places of interest to be seen.

We hear and read of "Arabia Petra," and tourists and explorers have written about it, but nowhere, we think, is there such a wealth of rock as in this valley of limestone in the neighbourhood of Ballyvaughan.

The bold mountain range above the town, appears from its formation and the peculiar marks on the face of the rock to be at one time the limit of the sea, which probably having receded, or an upheaval of the coast, left valley and mountain high and dry as they are. From Corcomroe Abbey the route may be diversified by

taking a southerly direction in order to see the deep cutting called by some the "Kyber Pass," through which the road leading to Carran was excavated out of the solid lime-stone rock, and for a considerable distance these rocks, which are almost perpendicular, and several feet high, are the only fences to the roadway at both sides. After passing Carran, and as one ascends the higher elevation, the country looks like a desert, no fences to the road, and altogether a dreary-looking spot. On one side is a valley bounded by a high lime-stone peak called the "Eagle's Nest," and on the other side a wide extent of country, rocks being the most prominent feature in the landscape. Proceeding onward we reach the southern brow of this hill, which we entered upon from the northern side, and now we have southward and westward a splendid view of hill, lake, wood, valley, and plain for miles, the view extending beyond Ennis, which is seen in the distance. From here it is a rapid

descent for a mile or so, and on reaching the level road we have a choice of either returning direct by Lemineagh Castle or driving round the beautiful lake of Inchiquin. Taking the latter route we turn to the left, and on arriving near Corofin, wheel to the right, and soon after ascend the mountain side, then through a dense forest, amid a profusion of ferns, with tiny waterfalls trickling down the mountain, and vistas of the lake below, dotted with little islands, and on its shore old ruins, Corofin, with a church which "tops the neighbouring hill," a few miles beyond, and then back to Lisdoonvarna or Ballyvaughan.

It is due to the memory of a nobleman some years deceased to say that he erected, at his sole expense, a system of water supply in this valley of north Clare, which redounds to his memory as a public benefactor, and which event is recorded on an imposing-looking fountain in Ballyvaughan. It being the first work, we

believe, of such magnitude inaugurated for rural supply in Ireland, it reflects the greater honour, not only on the deceased nobleman himself, but on the agent as well, who co-operated in bringing the scheme to completion with so much success, and with so much advantage to those living in a wide district of country who were subject to water-famine every summer or in dry seasons.

Having seen all that is worth observing in Ballyvaughan, instead of returning by Blackhead, we alter our route landward, towards the “corkscrew” hill, and turning to the left, on reaching the foot of a steep hill near Grogan’s Castle, arrive at a point on the road which, to look at even from a short distance, appears as if the highway terminates there; the driver asked where he was to go next; we told him, “drive on,” but still he could not be convinced there was an outlet, and asked again “whereto?” But we, knowing the locality from previous experience, urged



CORKSCREW HILL From a Photo by W. Lawrence

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him to proceed, and at last, obeying orders, he was surprised to see the road opening up before him as he progressed, and then on we went, winding our way upwards, from left to right, and right to left, in zig-zag fashion, scaling a height which, looked at from below, one would imagine that a pedestrian, much less a horse and vehicle, could possibly ascend so steep an incline. And proceeding in this way, at walking pace, for a considerable distance, up this height, gaining, on the principle of the screw-action, a few yards only, at each turn, till at length we arrive at the summit of this formidable obstacle, and then standing to rest, and contemplate, look backward at the glorious view of sea, land, wood, and rock, down in the valley below, and far away in the County Galway. Here we close, because the remainder of our journey back to Lisdoonvarna, has to a great extent, been described already, when writing of Kilfenora; indeed we have exceeded the limit prescribed when

we undertook the responsibility of writing this sketch, our original intention being simply to give to the public our own delightful experiences when sojourning at the coast, as we wandered among the rocks, and loitered on the cliffs, and, at evening, as the sun was setting, watched the orb of day drop, as it were, into the ocean, amid such a natural illumination as would put to shame the best efforts of a pyrotechnist, but the theme was so fascinating we were enticed to add line to line, and page to page, in order to give some idea of its wild grandeur to those who never before visited the west coast.

It is to us a labour of love to describe places with which we are so familiar, where we have so many friends, and where some pleasant days, as well as hours, have been spent in early life as well as when age has blanched the hair and made the step less elastic. We have often felt, like some ill-managed ship at sea in danger of foundering, when attempting to describe

scenery which the pencil and not the pen would more fitly illustrate. And now having surmounted all impediments and overcome the difficulties which the inexperienced in writing a book of even this small compass have to encounter, in conclusion ask our readers to forget its imperfections, having regard to the fact that all has been written with a view solely of exciting the curiosity of such of our readers as have never had the opportunity of beholding the scenes described, which, in our opinion, should be more widely known because so suitable for health and recreation, and should these humble efforts of ours induce any one to visit the beautiful region we have so imperfectly depicted, it shall be an ample reward for the labour and time expended in writing of the

“HOLIDAY HAUNTS ON THE WEST
COAST OF CLARE.”

FINIS.

INSTRUCTIONS TO TOURISTS AND OTHERS.

ROUTES AS FOLLOWS :

I—From Dublin by Midland Line, via Athenry Line, to Ennis, from thence by West Clare and South Clare Lines to Lisdoonvarna, Lahinch, Miltown Malbay, and Kilkee.

II—Also, from Dublin by Midland Line to Galway, and across the Bay by Steamer to Ballyvaughan, and from thence by car, either by Blackhead or over Corkscrew Hill to Lisdoonvarna.

III—From Dublin by Great Southern and Western and Waterford and Limerick Lines, via Limerick. Those travelling by this route have the option of going from Limerick to Kilkee direct by steamer to Kilrush, or rail to Foynes and from thence to Kilrush by steamer, and then over South Clare Railway, which is an extension of the West Clare Line, to Kilkee ; or, take Rail to Ennis and from thence by West Clare and South Clare Lines to all parts on the West Coast of Clare.

All these several routes have their own peculiar advantages and charms.

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